

The Friends of St James Church Swimbridge.

Newsletter Spring 2019

This newsletter is circulated to the Friends of St James and supporters of the Old School Room project. We will make it widely available, including on the Friends page of the St James Church website, as we are keen to let everyone know of the work we are doing together to preserve, maintain and enhance St James, its churchyard, Streamside Garden and the Old School Room



Church Signs

The Friends have paid for three elegant and informative new signs. These promote the church, Streamside Garden, Old School Room and Pre-school. They have been positioned near the three different entrances to the churchyard.

New Charity Status

To keep up with our growing success the Friends have upgraded their Charity Status to that of a Registered Charity. This will open us up to more grant opportunities and allow us to cope with a larger budget.

Our charity number is 1178390

The Old Schoolroom Project

The major Friends project is the plan to bring our ancient community building up to 21st century standards with an accessible toilet to serve users of the building and those attending church services and events. The plans include relocating the kitchen and improvements to the Upper Room to accommodate an archive devoted to local history and Parson Jack Russell.

We now have draft plans drawn up by our architect which are ready for further consultation. We have completed a detailed building survey. An essential asbestos survey has recently also been carried out. The cost of this, £720, for the Old School Room and the Church itself, has been met by the Friends. Last year we upgraded the electrics and installed smoke alarms, here and in the church. This has been funded by the Friends and an earlier legacy.



At the lunch in November given for Swimbridge pensioners by the Feoffees (an ancient village charity) a collection of over £86 was made for the Old School Room project as part of their support for this initiative.

The Upper Room was used in October, November and December for rehearsals for the Beaford Arts led community play *Hefted*, which was performed to acclaim in the Jubilee Hall in December.

Plans are in hand to host Art and Craft exhibitions in the Upper Room with coffee drop-in sessions. However, we need to replace the old chairs with folding ones to make more room, make a café area and obtain exhibition display boards.

We are hoping Friends and supporters will help by sponsoring a seat at a cost of £20. Each will bear the name of the donor if they wish. Please contact David Netherway 01271 830587. We are applying for grants, including the Lottery Awards for All. We have already secured £200 towards this goal from our North Devon District Councillor's Community Grant scheme and £250 from the South Molton Masonic Charities Association which is a great start.

Calendar

Thank you everyone who supported our Swimbridge calendar, which has been enthusiastically received and raised over £400 so far: it has been a great way to promote our charity. The Friends have donated spare copies of the calendar to the residents of Francis House and Swimbridge House.

Streamside Garden

Volunteers' time and skills, plus donations in the collecting box, have ensured that the garden is being well maintained. A new feature in memory of Anne Hayes is planned for this year.

Spring Q&As

Last year's talks series were a great success with a brilliant range of speakers and topics.



This year promises to be just as good. Do come and support these events if you can. You won't be disappointed.

As usual they will be held in the Old School Room at 7pm for 7.30:

Thursday 7 March, Philip Dalling: 'Jeremy Thorpe: in search of the legend'

Thursday 21 March: Dr Richard Westcott: 'Words in practice' (on his life as GP and writer)

Thursday 4 April, Michael Gee: 'Devon's orchards and how we took to cider' (the subject of his new book from Halsgrove)

Jack Russell Portrait

Specialist advice was sought regarding the oil painting that hung in the Old School Room.

The original Victorian portrait is unique and valuable but needs some restoration and re-framing at a cost of about £2500. It will make a superb feature of the planned Jack Russell archive. However, it will need to be the subject of a special fundraising effort or included in the Old School Room project funding.

Photo shows Mark Haworth Booth, Secretary of the Friends (right), with Stephen Calloway and Susan Owens, experts on Victorian art, examining the Russell portraits.



Our Annual General Meeting

We have recently held our AGM. Chaired by Rev Shaun O'Rourke, there were a good number of achievements to report and plans to discuss for the coming year. There are currently 50 members and a full team of trustees in place. In 2018 the Friends were able to fund £7675 of work to support our objectives and the end of our financial year there was £4180 in reserve.

Finally – Thank You!

You are very much appreciated as a member or supporter of the Friends of St James, Swimbridge. You really make a difference and help ensure that the Church St James, the Streamside Garden and the Old School Room continue to play their part in our community.